

# Daniel Dangerfield in Loudoun County

Records at the Loudoun County Courthouse



**Loudoun County**

**VIRGINIA**

WHERE TRADITION MEETS INNOVATION

# **Records at the Loudoun County Courthouse**

**Loudoun County has most of its legal records dating back to its founding in 1757.**

**Many of these records – deeds, wills, lawsuits – provide insight into the lives of people who were enslaved here. The people themselves left little to no archival evidence behind. It is through the records of their enslavers that we often learn their stories.**

**This presentation examines the legal records related to Daniel Dangerfield and his community of family and friends.**

# Timeline

1831-1832	approximate birth year of Daniel Dangerfield
1843, January 23	enslaver French Simpson wrote his will - no details about enslaved people but his wife Elizabeth inherited real estate and property (Will Book 2K:70)
1850 Slave Schedule	French Simpson listed as enslaving 11 people (Ancestry.com)
	1 male age 61
	1 female age 50
	1 male age 31
	1 female age 25
	1 male age 22
	1 male age 17
	2 males age 13
	1 female age 8
	1 male age 2
	1 female age 28
1854, November	Daniel Dangerfield left Loudoun County to seek freedom in the north (see 1859, March)
1855, May 27	French Simpson died
1855, June 11	French Simpson's will submitted to court for probate
1855, December 28	Inventory of his estate - 17 enslaved people listed but no one named Daniel (Will Book 2K:379)
1859, March	Elizabeth Simpson recorded proof at the courthouse of enslaving Daniel - listed "escape" date as November 1854 - provided physical description of Daniel and age of 27-28 years (Slave Issues/Judgments/1859-01)
1859, September	bill of complaint filed in court against French Simpson's estate - states that enslaved people were taken south by the administrator of the estate to be sold (Chancery Cause 1860-043)

# 1859 Order

The only document at the courthouse related to Daniel Dangerfield is an order recorded by his enslaver, Elizabeth Simpson.

This document is important because it provides a brief description of Daniel's physical appearance and the date that he left Loudoun to seek his freedom.

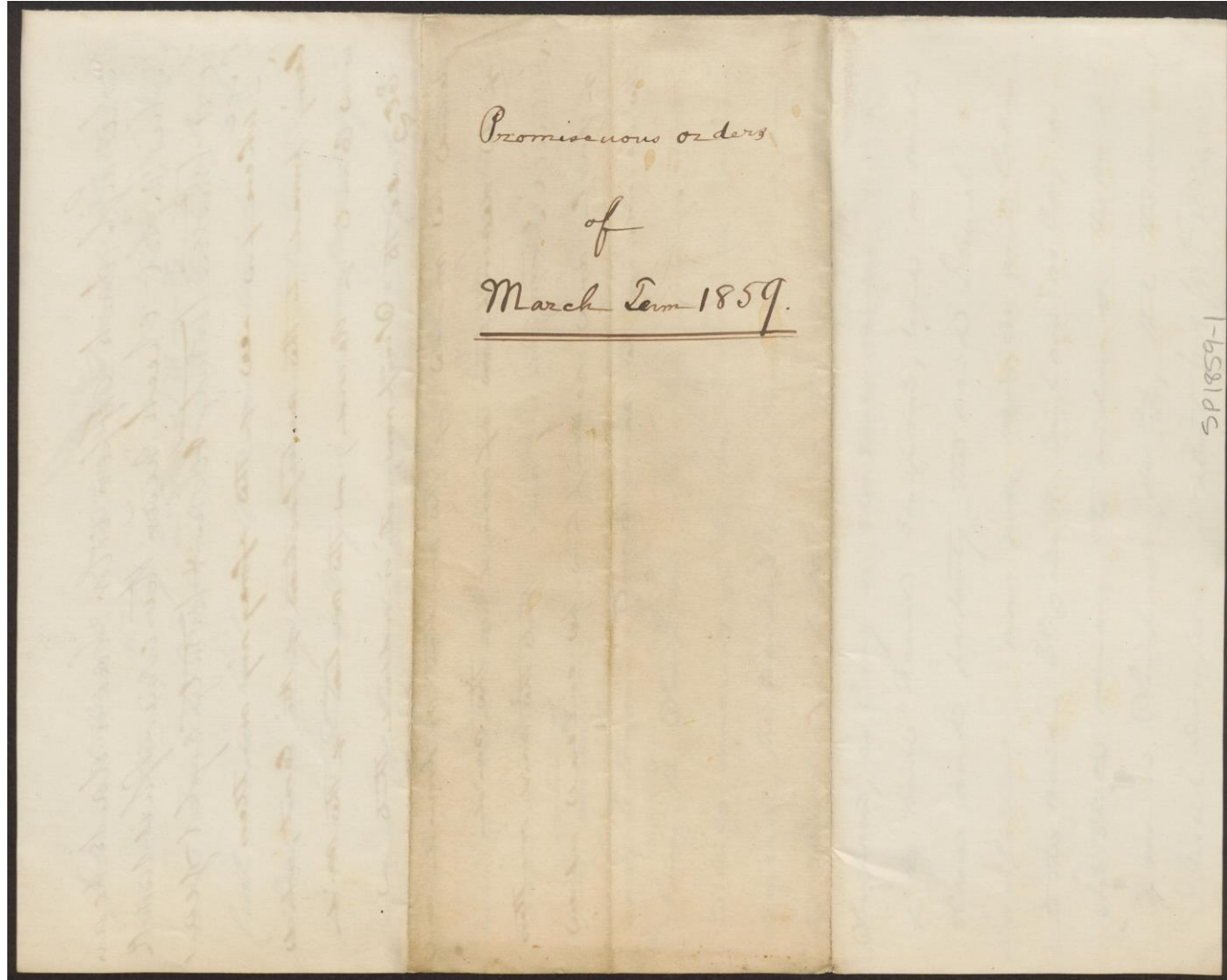
It shows the cruelty of slavery – the belief that a Black person was property and he or she owed their labor and service to an enslaver for life.

# 1859 Order

**Why did Elizabeth Simpson record this as a legal document at the courthouse?**

**Probably to prove ownership if Daniel was captured and returned to Loudoun County.**

# March 17, 1859 – Elizabeth Simpson recorded proof at the Courthouse



Promiscuous Orders  
of  
March Term 1859

What is a Promiscuous Order?

It is a term for the clerk of court's notes to himself to make entries in the Order Books. The notes were written on pieces of paper, often called loose papers.

At a County Court held for the County  
of Loudoun in the State of Virginia  
at the Courthouse of said County on  
the 17<sup>th</sup> day of March 1859

Elizabeth Simpson, the widow of French  
Simpson deceased, this day made satisfacto-  
-ry proof to this Court of the matters herein-  
-after stated that is to say, that ~~on~~<sup>in</sup> the  
month ~~day~~ of November 1854, a certain  
male slave called Daniel Dangerfield,  
who was then held, in the said County and  
State, to service and labor, by a certain  
French Simpson, since deceased, escaped  
from the said County and State and from  
the service and possession of the said French  
Simpson, that the said Daniel Dangerfield  
at the time of his said escape ~~and service~~  
~~and labor~~ was for the life of the said Daniel  
Dangerfield the slave and property of the said  
French Simpson, and as such slave and property  
then <sup>owed</sup> service and labor for the life of the said

At a County Court held for the County  
of Loudoun in the State of Virginia  
at the Courthouse of said county on  
the 17<sup>th</sup> day of March 1859.

Elizabeth Simpson, the widow of French  
Simpson deceased, this day made a satisfacto-  
ry proof to this Court of the matters herein-  
after stated that is to say, that the in the month of  
November 1854, a certain  
male slave called Daniel Dangerfield,  
who was then held, in the said County and  
State, to service and labor, by a certain  
French Simpson, since deceased, escaped  
from the said County and State and from  
the service and possession of the said French  
Simpson, that the said Daniel Dangerfield  
at the time of his said escape  
was for the life of the said Daniel  
Dangerfield the slave and property of the said  
French Simpson, and as such slave and property  
then owed service and labor for the life of the said...



Daniel Dangerfield to the said French Simpson,  
that on the 27<sup>th</sup> day of May 1855, the  
said French Simpson departed <sup>in said County</sup> this life, having  
first made his last will and testament  
which was duly proved according to the law of  
the said State of Virginia, and ~~thereby~~  
is now of record among the records of this  
Court, that, the said Elizabeth Simpson  
now is and ever since the death of the said  
French Simpson has remained unmarried,  
that <sup>by virtue of</sup> under the provisions of said last will  
and testament and of the assent of  
James H. Simpson the administrator with  
the will annexed of the said French Simpson  
deceased, the said Daniel Dangerfield is now  
the slave and property of the said Elizabeth  
Simpson, so long as she shall remain the widow  
of the said French Simpson, and as such  
slave and property the said Daniel  
Dangerfield now owes service and labor  
to the said Elizabeth Simpson so long as  
she shall remain the widow of the said  
French Simpson dec'd., that the said  
Daniel Dangerfield is about five feet seven or eight

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said French Simpson in said County departed this life having  
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Simpson, so long as she shall remain the widow  
of the said French Simpson, and as such  
slave and property the said Daniel  
Dangerfield now owes service and labor  
to the said Elizabeth Simpson so long as  
she shall remain the widow of the said  
French Simpson dec'd., that the said  
Daniel Dangerfield is about five feet seven or eight...



...inches high, dark copper color, has a dark scar  
on his right cheek near the corner of his mouth  
he is between twenty seven & twenty eight years  
of age whereupon all of the foregoing matters  
being proved to the satisfaction of this Court, which  
is a Court of Records, on the motion of the said  
Elizabeth Simpson, it is ordered that a  
Record be made of the matters so proved and  
of the description aforesaid of the said  
Daniel Dangerfield, and that the said matters  
of proof and description be entered upon  
the Records of the said Court.

...inches high, dark copper color, has a dark scar  
on his right cheek near the corner of his mouth  
he is between twenty seven and twenty eight  
years of age – whereupon all of the foregoing  
matters being proved to the satisfaction of this  
Court, which is a Court of Record, on the motion  
of the said Elizabeth Simpson, it is ordered that  
a record be made of the matters so proved and  
of the description aforesaid of the said Daniel  
Dangerfield, and that the said matters of proof  
and description be entered upon the records of  
the said Court.

# Daniel Dangerfield – Freedom Seeker

What prompted Daniel to leave Loudoun in 1854 to seek his freedom? Why not earlier?

We may never know if there was a specific cause beyond the human desire for equality and natural rights. However, the illness and anticipated death of the enslaver caused concern for enslaved people. It was a time when they might be sold to pay off debts or divided among the enslaver's family members as bequeathments in the will. It was a time when an enslaved person might take matters into their own hands and seek their freedom.

# French Simpson's will

Written 23 January 1843

“...all the balance of my Estate both real and personal I  
leave to my wife Elizabeth Simpson...”

Personal property included enslaved people.

In the name of god Amen. I French Simpson of the  
County of Loudon and State of Virginia being sick and  
low in body but of sound mind and disposing memory,  
for which I thank god and calling to mind the uncertainty  
of human life and being desirous to dispose of such  
worldly estate as it hath pleased god to bless me with  
I give and bequeath the same in manner and form following  
after all my just debts and funeral Expenses be paid  
I give to my son John William Simpson Choice of all the  
horses or Cotts on the farm except the work horses and for  
him not to be charged with the same, <sup>my</sup> my further wish  
and desire is that if any of my other children should  
leave their mother, that they should have something to comfort  
the world with equal to what I have advanced to my  
daughter Ann and Susan and to be charged with the  
same as they are, provided it can be spared and a  
sufficiency left for the balance of the family, all the  
balance of my Estate both real and personal I leave to  
my Wife Elizabeth Simpson to be enjoyed by her during  
her life or so long as she shall remain my Widow  
but provided she should marry I then wish her to have  
only one third of my Estate for her life and the balance  
to be Equally Divided among all my children both male  
and female and lastly I do hereby constitute and appoint  
John Simpson & Robert A. J. Executors to this my last  
will and testament hereby revoking all other former  
wills or testaments by me heretofore made, In witness  
whereof I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal  
this 23 day of January 1843

Test

Samuel Rogers,  
Philip Vansickler, Jr.

French Simpson

Deal



# Inventory of French Simpson's Estate

7 November 1855

List and value of enslaved people  
in Simpson's personal estate.

They are people Daniel probably  
would have known.

A handwritten list on aged, slightly stained paper. The list is organized into two columns: names on the left and monetary values on the right. The names are written in cursive, and the values are in a mix of cursive and printed numerals. A large, dark ink blot obscures part of the middle of the list. At the bottom, the total value is underlined and written in a larger, bolder script.

Cornelius + 3	\$105.00
Betty }	
Isaac	850.00
Benjamin	1000.00
Sally + child	800.00
Isaac	1000.00
Armistead	1000.00
Lucy	550.00
Ann	900.00
Mittis	800.00
Semima + child	850.00
Richard	300.00
David	200.00
Mahaly	250.00
Laura	175.00
	<u>\$8780.00</u>

# Daniel had good reason to be concerned

The death of an enslaver often meant enslaved people were sold to pay off debts or because they were no longer needed on the plantation. This appears to be the case in the death of French Simpson.

In the accounting records for Simpson's estate, there is a payment to the estate administrators for transporting enslaved people to Alexandria where they were sold.

1857		The estate of French Simpson dec'd.		Principal	Int.
Feb.	1 <sup>st</sup>	Am't. brought forward		45722 07	
"	5 <sup>th</sup>	cash paid for R. Simpson ap'ce of L.C. Lucette due bill	80 60		
"	"	cash paid for R. Simpson for Doc. Baldwin med. ap'ce.	75 37		
"	7 <sup>th</sup>	cash paid Wm. Beverly Note & Int. to Wm. H. Gray	31 41		
Mar.	9 <sup>th</sup>	cash paid Elisha Holmes for J. H. Hughes ap'ce Note & Int.	63 12		
"	"	cash paid James Hoge - Note & Int.	187 95		
"	"	cash paid W. d. L. Hendrick an ap'ce for wood	5 00		
"	13 <sup>th</sup>	cash paid Anne Dillow - Int. on Note	68 50		
"	"	cash paid J. T. Wynkoop - smith ap'ce.	" 87		
"	16 <sup>th</sup>	cash paid S. Elgin - Int. on Note	31 99		
April	13 <sup>th</sup>	cash paid E. Tansichlev in full of ap'ce.	5 87		
"	"	cash paid Wm. Myers pt. R. d. L. Hughes his 2 accounts	6 75		
May	13 <sup>th</sup>	cash paid James Alnutt his ap'ce	3 95		
June	8 <sup>th</sup>	cash paid A. d. Lee - due bill & Int.	7 70		
"	"	cash paid Wm. Gline his 2 ap'cs	36 03		
July	10 <sup>th</sup>	cash paid Geo. Statare his Note ap'ce & Int.	375 49		
"	11 <sup>th</sup>	cash paid Ruane Coe in part on Note	200 00		
"	13 <sup>th</sup>	cash paid R. G. Alnutt his ap'ce.	6 87		
"	"	cash paid R. J. Simpson am't. of expenses se. looking for negros	88 00		
"	"	A driver expenses in taking negroes to Alex <sup>a</sup> for sale	21 38		
"	"	cash paid J. R. Simpson for clover seed mules &c.	43 50		
"	16 <sup>th</sup>	Commissioner's fee for making this settlement	5 50		
"	"	5 per cent Commission on \$9994.50	499 72		
"	"	Balance in hands of Adams to date per Contra	2427 36	109 23	
			79994 50	4109 23	

"	A driver expenses in taking negroes to Alex <sup>a</sup> for sale	21 38
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"Administrators expenses in taking negroes to Alexa [Alexandria] for sale \$21.38"



# Daniel had good reason to be concerned

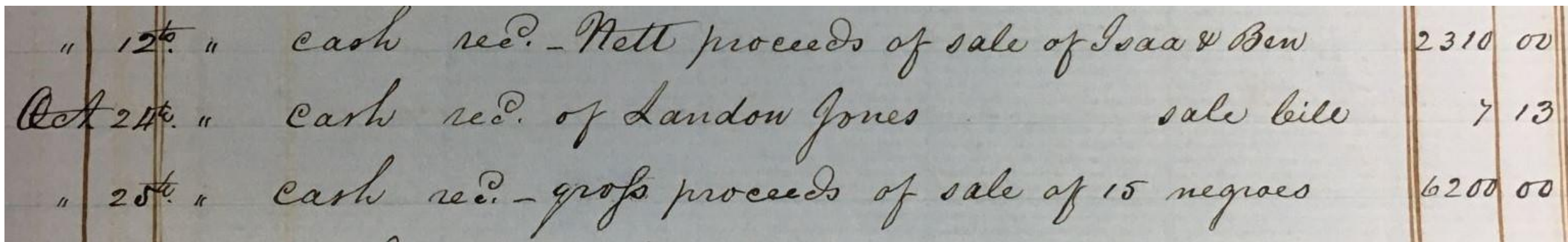
After Simpson's death, 17 enslaved people were sold for a total of \$8,510.

Isaac and Ben appear to have been sold privately (thus the separate line in the estate account) and the other 15 enslaved people taken to Alexandria for sale.

The rest of Simpson's personal estate – livestock, farm equipment, furniture, etc. – sold for \$5,053.69.

The people Simpson held in bondage accounted for 63% of the value of his personal estate.

*Isaac and Ben were sold for \$2,310  
15 other enslaved people were sold for \$6,200*



" 12 <sup>th</sup> "	cash recd. - Nett proceeds of sale of Isaac & Ben	2310 00
Oct 24 <sup>th</sup> "	cash recd. of Landon Jones sale bill	7 13
" 25 <sup>th</sup> "	cash recd. - gross proceeds of sale of 15 negroes	6200 00

1857		The estate of Fiench Simpson decd.	Principal	Int.
Feb.	4 <sup>th</sup>	To Amt. brought forward	45722	07
"	5 <sup>th</sup>	cash paid for R. Simpson apoc of L.C. Lucate due bill	80	60
"	"	cash paid for R. Simpson for Doc. Baldwin med. apc.	75	37
"	7 <sup>th</sup>	cash paid Wm. Beverly Note & Int. to Wm. H. Gray	31	41
Mar.	9 <sup>th</sup>	cash paid Elisha Holmes for J. H. Hughes apoc Note & Int.	63	12
"	"	cash paid James Hoge - Note & Int.	187	95
"	"	cash paid W. H. Hendrick an apc for wood	5	00
"	13 <sup>th</sup>	cash paid Anne Dillen - Int. on Note	68	50
"	"	cash paid J. T. Wynkoop - smith apc.	"	87
"	16 <sup>th</sup>	cash paid S. Elgin - Int. on Note	31	99
April	13 <sup>th</sup>	cash paid E. Tansichler in full of apc.	5	87
"	"	cash paid Wm. Myers pt. A. L. Hughes his 2 accounts	6	75
May	13 <sup>th</sup>	cash paid James Alnutt his apc	3	95
June	8 <sup>th</sup>	cash paid A. H. Lee - due bill & Int.	7	70
"	"	cash paid Wm. Gline his 2 apc's	36	03
July	10 <sup>th</sup>	cash paid Geo. Statare his Note apc. & Int.	375	49
"	11 <sup>th</sup>	cash paid Ruane Coe in part on Note	200	00
"	13 <sup>th</sup>	cash paid R. G. Alnutt his apc.	6	87
"	"	cash paid R. J. Simpson amt. of expenses & c. looking for <sup>run away negro</sup> am <sup>t</sup>	88	00
"	"	Admrs. expenses in taking negroes to Alex <sup>r</sup> for sale	21	38
"	"	cash paid J. R. Simpson for clover seed mules &c.	43	50
"	16 <sup>th</sup>	Commissioners' fee for making this settlement	5	50
"	"	5 per cent Commission on 79994.50	499	72
"	"	Balance in hands of Adms to date per Contra	2427	36 109 23
			79994	50 109 23

# Looking for Daniel

On July 10, 1857, R.J. Simpson was paid \$88 for "looking for run away" enslaved person. The accounting entry does not indicate when he did the "looking" but obviously before this date and probably for Daniel.

"cash paid R. J. Simpson amt. of expenses & c. looking for <sup>run away negro</sup> am<sup>t</sup> 88 00

"cash paid R.J. Simpson amt. of expenses & c. [etc.] looking for run away negro \$88.00"

# Sold South

About four years after Simpson's death, his daughter and son-in-law, Eliza F. and Charles Showers, filed a lawsuit against the estate.

An enslaved girl named Lucy had been "given" to Eliza as per her father's will. The estate administrators wanted to include Lucy in the group of enslaved people taken south for sale.

Eliza agreed, assuming she would receive payment from the sale of Lucy. She did not, which is why she and her husband filed the lawsuit.



# Sold South

*"Some few months after his [French Simpson's] death, it may be three or four months, James H. Simpson, the Admr. c.t.a. being about to go south with certain slaves of the estate for the purpose of selling them, asked permission to take Lucy also, which your oratrix [Eliza Simpson Showers], with the consent of her husband granted, believing as they both did that it would be to the interest of all concerned that the slaves should be thus disposed of – but she and her husband yielded their affront to this arrangement with the understanding, on their part, that they were to receive from the said Admr on his return a sum of money equal to the proceeds of the sale of Lucy, by way of advancement..."*


by the Testator in his lifetime from \$800, 00 to \$850, 00 or upwards. Subsequent to the making of said will, and in their Father's lifetime, Frances another of his daughters was married to David Hughes and Mary, another daughter was married to Thomas Gulic, and they were each, at the time of their said marriage or soon afterwards, advanced by their Father to about an equal amount, or possibly not quite so much.

The complainants were also married in his lifetime, and they were put in possession of a servant girl named Lucy, on the first day of January 1854, or thereabouts, and she continued in their possession from that date until September or October 1855, when they parted with her under the circumstances hereinafter mentioned.

It is believed by your Orators that it was not the intention of the said Testator to place said servant girl Lucy in their possession as a gift or advancement, but that intending as he did to advance them equally with the other children, but for reasons best known to himself not intending to make Lucy the subject of such advancement, he left her in the hands of your female complainant, for her use and benefit, until it suited his convenience to carry out his intention, when he designed giving them either another slave in her stead, or some other property.

But before carrying out this, his intention, all his plans and purposes were arrested by the hand of death, and the servant girl Lucy was left in possession of your Oratrix.

Some few months after his death, it may be three or four months, James H. Simpson, the Admr c.t.a. being about to go South with certain slaves of the estate for the purpose of selling them, asked permission to take Lucy also, which your Oratrix, with the consent of her husband granted, believing as they both did that it would be to the interest of all concerned that the slaves should be thus disposed of – but she and her husband yielded their affront to this arrangement with the understanding, on their part, that <sup>they</sup> were to receive from the said Admr on his return a sum of money equal to the proceeds of the sale of Lucy, by way of advancement under the 2<sup>nd</sup> clause of the will of their Father – and they incline to the opinion, although not disposed positively to aver that the said James



Some few months after his death, it may be three or four months, James H. Simpson, the Admr c.t.a. being about to go South with certain slaves of the estate for the purpose of selling them, asked permission to take Lucy also, which your Oratrix, with the consent of her husband granted, believing as they both did that it would be to the interest of all concerned that the slaves should be thus disposed of – but she and her husband yielded their affront to this arrangement with the understanding, on their part, that <sup>they</sup> were to receive from the said Admr on his return a sum of money equal to the proceeds of the sale of Lucy, by way of advancement.

# Daniel Dangerfield and His Community

As we look at the broader story of Daniel Dangerfield, we see a brave young man who left the people and places he knew to seek his universal right to freedom. After great challenges, Daniel achieved it.

We see a community of enslaved people torn apart and sold to the deep south, where they probably toiled in cotton or rice fields.

We do not know how the stories end for Cornelius & Betty, Jesse, Benjamin, Sally & child, Isaac, Armistead, Lucy, Ann, Willis, Jemima & child, Richard, David, Mahaly, and Laura.



# Loudoun County Clerk of the Circuit Court Historic Records Division

Email us at [Clerks-Archives@Loudoun.gov](mailto:Clerks-Archives@Loudoun.gov)



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